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RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THEORY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

Special seminar of

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THEORY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

with

Christophe Eckes

The correspondence between
Hermann Weyl and Erich Hecke

13th April 2015
Sedláčkova 19, 306 14 Pilsen
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Special seminar of Research Centre for Theory
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abstract
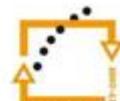
The correspondence between
Hermann Weyl and Erich Hecke

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The mathematician and mathematical physicist Hermann Weyl carries on a regular correspondence with the number theorist Erich Hecke until the death of the latter in 1947. Their letters, which are currently preserved at the Hermann Weyl Archives (ETH Zürich) have not been studied systematically until now. However, their correspondence appears to be a central element in order to describe their career and to get an overview of their scientific productions. Moreover, a careful study of these letters also reveals that Hecke and Weyl share the same conception of mathematical knowledge and that they belong to very close intellectual circles. At the beginning of our talk, we will try to explain why this correspondence has been neglected by many historians of mathematics until now and we will underline its importance in order to avoid some biases in the description of Hecke's and Weyl's institutional trajectories. Then, we will describe anew Weyl's exil after the nazis came to power. We must recall here that Weyl becomes permanent professor at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS, Princeton) during the Winter semester 1933 and he remains there until his retirement in 1951. To this end, we will refer to his correspondence with Hecke and Abraham Flexner (Founding director of the IAS). At that time, Hecke worries about the academic future of his colleague and friend Erwin Panofsky, who has just been dismissed from the university of Hamburg in April 1933. Panofsky will finally get a permanent professorship in art history at the IAS in October 1935. Finally, we will describe Hecke's situation in Hamburg from 1933 to his death: his participation to the international congress of mathematicians in Oslo in 1936, his six month stay at the IAS in 1938 (he is invited by Weyl), etc.